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## SOME DISCUSSIONS OF PRESENT DAY DRAMA

### I.—STEPHEN PHILLIPS' DRAMATIC TECHNIQUE

Since the appearance of a single volume of poems in 1897, Mr. Phillips has devoted his attention almost exclusively to the drama and has produced five plays: "Paolo and Francesca," in 1899; "Herod," in 1900; "Ulysses," 1902; "The Sin of David," 1904; and "Nero," in 1906. It is generally agreed that of these five plays "Herod" has been the most successful upon the boards. About no other contemporary playwright does there seem to exist such a diversity of opinion. Some critics, and they are men of position and weight, have declared him the greatest of the living English dramatists; and few writers have been so much discussed both in critical journals and in stage-dom.

It is my purpose to examine these plays from the dramatic side, trying to estimate their value for the stage, considering the dramatic craftsmanship and the devices upon which the writer depends for his effects, and touching on the literary style only in so far as it may aid us in determining the probable success of the plays if actually presented. In beginning I shall state some qualities marking all the plays. I shall then endeavor to trace these characteristics through all the dramas.

Perhaps the first thing that impresses the reader is the Greek element so strongly marked in all the plays. We should do wrong, however, in classifying these dramas as Greek; for they are the work of a man Hellenic in spirit but reared in an age offering the dramatist opportunities for spectacular effects never dreamed of in previous times; himself an actor trained to the possibilities of the modern theatre by six years of experience on the boards. This Greek element in the plays has done much to attract the attention of the scholarly world. We see this spirit manifested in the single thread of events that runs through the dramas; never for a moment does the attention swerve from one group of characters. Then, too, in the small number of characters he presents, Mr. Phillips follows the Greeks. Most striking of all is his delineation of character. Throughout his plays

we feel the relentless hand of fate, directing and controlling a set of men and women who struggle with the inevitable. The gods decree the fate of the Puritan Sir Herbert Lisle, no less than that of Ulysses. Mr. Phillips follows the Greeks in taking for his treatment a story familiar to his hearers. Like the Athenian audience, we know approximately the entire course of events before the play begins, and we are interested chiefly in watching the struggle.

Mingled with the Hellenic elements we find characteristics of the dawn of the twentieth century in such a strange blending as to recall the famous bust of Emerson, which shows one side of the face Yankee and the other side Greek. His experiences in the modern theatre seem to have impressed on him the advantages now offered for marrying pictorial representation to acting; and by means of tableaux and stage machinery he has secured some of his best effects. Moreover, this Greek born out of his time shows in his conceptions of life, in his phrasing, and in a dozen other ways the profound influence of the present age.

"Paolo and Francesca," the first of Mr. Phillips' plays, is a new handling of an old and familiar story, and is in parts a most beautiful piece of poetry. We are willing to condone in a dramatist attempting his first flight, what we must now acknowledge as a notable characteristic of our author: the lack of any marked ability in plot structure. Indeed, he seems to realize the need of stiffening the plot of his drama and adds some extraneous characters, such as Lucrezia, a cousin of Giovanni, and Angela, a blind and aged servant, who help to give tone and shading to the play. Perhaps the very nakedness of the drama centers our interest upon the struggle which arises not from the clash of character upon character, but from the resistance of three people caught in the stream of fate and borne down to their destruction.

Since the dramatic struggle is clear, and the plot a very simple one based upon a well known story, the management of the exposition is a comparatively easy matter, requiring but little time or space. The chief characteristic of the plot is its inevitableness. The play resembles the development of some

These limitations shape the characters in such a way that we may question whether the play will ever stand any chance in competing for the actor's favor with the less poetic but certainly more dramatic treatment of the same story by Boker.

Mr. Phillips' Francesca is an untrained girl, fresh from the convent school, who is crushed without the power of resistance. True, there is a beauty about the conception; after life's single fever she sleeps well. But most actresses would choose, and choose rightly I think, to play the part of Boker's full-blooded, more passionate woman of the world, conscious of her power, and daring to enjoy her love and to brave the consequences. Again, the difference between Mr. Phillips' play and d'Annunzio's strong conception is that between a delicate lyric and a vital dramatic imagination.

Mr. Phillips shows the Greek influence in his occasional use of Angela and Lucrezia as a chorus. The play, too, is Greek in the lack of humor. Even the few attempts at humor reflect the sombre color of the drama. The manner in which the messengers are used also recalls the Athenian dramatists.

What we may say of the style of one play, is in a considerable measure characteristic of them all. Mr. Phillips, certainly, is a master in the use of blank verse. His touch is not, perhaps, so delicate as Tennyson's; and he is often lacking in force, a defect remedied only in part by the peculiar limpidness of the verse. As the play is destitute of a forceful plot, Mr. Phillips depends much upon the lyric element, emphasized both through a certain tone running through many of the speeches, and by the little songs. Scattered through the plays, too, are exquisite descriptions of nature, which are valuable poetically rather than dramaturgically. Such, for example, is Paolo's description of the coming dawn:

Now fades the last star to the  
Star to the East; a mystic breathing comes;  
And all the leaves once quivered and were still.

Among the other characteristics appearing in "Paolo and Francesca" and emphasized in his subsequent work, we may note the use of catch phrases—one of them, "Youth goes toward youth," might serve as a keynote to the play. Now and then we find ironic repetends that would afford a chance for a good piece of acting. Such, for example, is the manner in which Giovanni entrusts Francesca for a second time to Paolo's care, using nearly the same words as before his confidence had been shattered.

Mr. Phillips makes great use of contrast; not the contrast of one story against another, for practically, as we have noted, he holds to a single thread of events, but rather of situation against situation. Lucrezia inflames Giovanni's mind and afterwards struggles to avert the consequences of his madness; Giovanni's trust and love shown Paolo make all the keener his subsequent suspicion and hatred. We should feel as spectators that at times this contrast had been painted too strikingly in black and white were it not for the author's skillful insertion of irony which serves as shading. Such, for illustration, is Giovanni's declaration that he and Paolo are "fiercest friends, with but one heart, one honor and one death," and his subsequent assertion to Paolo,

such sympathy is ours, so close are we,  
That what I suffer you straightway must feel.

So we might quote from the beginning to the very end of the drama repeated illustrations of the use of this device.

We are impressed, I think, in reading this play, with the stage directions explicit in the lines. Perhaps the writer felt that a drama moving so slowly needed all the aid possible from the actor's art. Possibly he realized that his work was destined for the closet rather than the stage, and therefore added these little visual hints. Be this as it may, we notice certain favorite devices. Three or four times in this play reference is made to one of the characters seizing another by the arm.

*Lucrezia.*

Giovanni, loose

Francesca's hands.

We may note in passing that this particular bit of stage business is employed several times in each of the different plays. I choose, almost at random, illustrations of this dramatic visualization which marks the entire work of the playwright. All these instances are taken from thirty consecutive lines of a scene between Lucrezia and Giovanni:

*Luc.* That crouch as of a beast about to spring.  
I dare not, will not speak till you are calm.

*Giov.* This steel is true that I can bend it  
Into a hoop.

*Luc.* You stop the blood in my arm; release your hold.

*Luc.* You speak as in a trance.

Giovanni swoons and Lucrezia comments:

I must not call, the foam is on his lips.  
The veins outstand. And yet I have a joy,  
A bitter joy! I'll lay his head down here.

Pages of instances might be adduced to show that whether or not we are willing to grant that Mr. Phillips possesses the dramatic gift, we must admit that he writes with an eye fixed on the actors, aiding them in the conception of the characters and in determining the stage business.

Some features of staging appearing in his earlier work are re-emphasized in his later plays. He employs in all the dramas a scene with a gallery as a part of the setting. I presume he has been attracted to such an arrangement by the chances it affords for tableau effects. While it is especially in his later plays that he more frequently employs the powers of stagecraft to produce effects of light and shade, even here he makes some use of the pictorial art. He shows us Paolo viewing the turret and tower of Rimini, red-litten in the summer sunset. Dawn breaks as the lovers' lips meet.

We mentioned a moment ago the author's use of tableaux and of pantomime. Notable in this connection are the directions at the end of Act I, where the marriage of Giovanni and Francesca is about to take place. "Exit marriage procession of kinsmen, etc., led by Giovanni and Paolo. Meanwhile enter from the other side Francesca, Lucrezia, and attendant Ladies. Francesca, in passing, pauses and offers a trinket to Angela, who shudders, letting it fall. Exeunt all but Angela, who remains staring before her. Curtain."

"Herod," the second of the plays, has been the most successful of all in its presentation on the stage. Mr. Phillips has here treated the story of Herod's love and loss of his wife Mariamne through his ordering the death of her brother, the young Aristobulus, who threatened the throne. So far as I can judge, the play contains nothing distinctly Hebraic but a great deal that is thoroughly modern. Certainly to speak of death as the "democratic doom," while a common enough idea, is to use the phraseology of to-day. Granting this, however, we must allow that the drama has a unity of interest through at least two acts

which, though it does not grip us, holds us in a way far beyond the power of "Paolo and Francesca." But even here the dramatist limits himself by his ever dominant fatalistic conception. Herod is governed by this fear of fate:

If this thing has been fated from the first?  
*Gadias.* It is the fault of dreamers to fear fate.

The moment of highest interest comes in the essential clash within Herod himself as to whether he shall permit the death of Aristobulus. Generally speaking, the management of the exposition is stronger and more direct than in "Paolo and Francesca." This latter play impresses us as do those flowers that have bloomed in the shade, beautiful in their way but lacking the life given by the sunshine. The dialogue, too, is sharper and more clearly managed. Salome and Cypros, mother and sister of Herod, plan the death of Mariamne in dialogue whose brilliancy and polish contrast strongly with much of the author's work. In some places the drama moves along strong and swift, as when Mariamne wrings from the reluctant Sohemus the secret of the death of Aristobulus. In the Third Act, which depicts the attempts to keep the demented Herod from realizing that his wife is dead, there is, broadly speaking, no action; nearly all is left to the actor's power of suggestion. If it be indicative of a great drama that the chief parts are, in their way, easy to act, this play must stand condemned; for it certainly would require a great deal of hard work on the part of the actor.

This drama impresses us, too, by a distinct advance in some matters of technique. If we grant that the theme is to be treated as Mr. Phillips has treated it, the play is divided into its Acts with inevitableness. The writer prepares much more skillfully for the entrance of his characters. We do not feel, as at times in "Paolo and Francesca," that they are dragged in because they are needed. The "aside" is employed with less frequency. His crowds of supernumeraries are managed to better advantage. We mark a better balancing of character against character.

The attention to the details of stage business explicit in the lines of the drama, which we noted as a characteristic of "Paolo and Francesca," is so plainly marked as to force itself even upon the most casual reader of the drama. We perceive an increased



use of light to mark the passing of time. Very impressive is the tableau that closes the drama, telling its story powerfully and simply, with all the force afforded by an ocular presentation. The body of the dead Queen is carried in and the throng departs. "Herod is left alone by the litter, standing motionless. The Curtain descends; then rises, and it is night, with a few stars. It descends, and again rises, and now it is the glimmer of the dawn which falls upon Herod and Mariamne, he still standing rigid and with fixed stare in a cataleptic trance."

We have it on good authority that "Ulysses" was written at the suggestion of the dramatist's faithful friend, Mr. Herbert Beerbohm Tree, who had long desired to play the part of the great Greek chieftan. The play itself is a strange mixture, from the very list of *dramatis personæ*, with Ulysses its single Latinized name, to the complete, little, isolated drama of the last Act. We might characterize the play as a cross between the Shakespearian "Henry V" and the once popular extravaganza, "The Twelfth Temptation." In its structure "Ulysses" resembles the old chronicle plays. It has no single, unified, coherent plot, but consists of certain scenes from the Odyssey changed to afford matter "for dramatic presentation and dramatic contrast." Its plot is no better or no worse than those of the historical plays of Shakespeare. It resembles the extravaganza in its elaborate spectacular features, and shows us the dramatist's use of pantomime, stage pictures, and musical features carried far beyond anything he has previously attempted.

The play opens with a Prologue: The Gods in council decide that Ulysses shall be allowed to return home and send Hermes to warn Calypso that she shall not hinder his departure. Since the Gods have so ordained, Ulysses departs and passes down to Hades for the tidings he must gain before returning home. In the last Act he rescues Penelope just as she is forced to make a choice among her suitors. Such a dramatization must, through a large part, depend upon something exterior to the plot. If we except the last Act, we find the play lacking any essential struggle; and even in that Act, powerful as it is at times, everything is in the control of Athene, whose thunder bids Ulysses reveal himself, and whose appearance overwhelms the suitors.

The characteristics we have marked before obtrude themselves as in neither of the preceding dramas. Never for a moment do we forget that all is in the power of the Gods. "Fate has decreed," is stamped across the face of every page. What unity the play possesses comes from the presence of the hero; he is never absent from our minds, though the scene may represent the Gods in council or Telemachus in the impotency of his rage against the suitors.

The Prologue and the first two Acts are much inferior in movement to the third. The last Act begins slowly; but it soon accelerates its movement and later surges along in a manner, to me at least, unsurpassed in any of the dramas. The handling of the exposition in this Act is well managed; though for obvious reasons the play requires little attention to bringing up a back story or to giving a setting. Whatever may have been the intention of the dramatist, the end of the Prologue strikes us as not very successful. After disposing of the fate of Ulysses, Zeus ends the Scene thus:

The cup, bright Ganymede! Ah, from the first  
The guiding of this globe engendered thirst.

In the management of the dialogue Ulysses marks a decided change. There is still the beautiful poetic touch so noticeable in "Paolo and Francesca;" but it has grown less florid and has gained a firmness, directness and simplicity which—judging by the dramaturgic standard—marks the greatest improvement his work has shown. Mr. Phillips' use of the heroic couplet in the Prologue is less happy than his management of blank verse and of prose; it impresses us as the well done exercise of a good craftsman in verse, turning out his neat phrases. In certain passages we are forcefully reminded of Tennyson. We might well guess that the great laureate wrote the following lines:

I'll drift no more upon the dreary sea.  
No yearning have I now, and no desire.  
Here would I be at ease upon this isle  
Set in the glassy ocean's azure swoon,  
With sward of parsley and of violet,  
And poplars shivering in a silvery dream.

Now and then we discover a touch of Elizabethan luxuriance, as in the beautifully poetic, though not strictly dramatic lines,

O death, thou hast a beckon to the brave,  
Thou last sea of the navigator, last  
Plunge of the diver, and last hunter's leap.

We have noted before that these plays are characterized by a single tone; everything is of a sombre color. "Ulysses" is practically the only play with an attempt at humor. The author's sense of humor, judged by its results in this drama, is not very pronounced. Zeus thunders softly as the Gods twit him about his marital relations, and then more loudly as they continue their laughter. An insolent suitor creates much laughter among his companions; I fear he would not be equally successful with a modern audience.

But if the author is less fortunate in his attempted humor, he has given us in the last Act many little touches that would prove effective in the mouth of a good actor. I choose an illustration at random. Ulysses has returned and, unknown to Telemachus, tells him,

I saw thy father on a lone sea isle  
Once, and he spoke thy name.

*Tel.* O what said he?

*Ulys.* Only thy name. He looked o'er the wide sea,  
And softly said "Little Telemachus."

The play abounds in those devices which we might call dramatic color and shading, such as contrast, recurring phrases, irony, and anticipatory hints, which in a way help to knit together the different parts of the drama. Mr. Phillips is much more careful than were the Elizabethan chronicle play writers to give his plays at least an appearance of unity.

The characters have but little human interest; but now and then these almost will-less creations flush into a genuine humanity with its joys and sorrows. Penelope descending from her loom, Telemachus' recognition of his father, and the devotion of the old servants, all impress us as good illustrations of what Lowell calls the real, in contrast with the actual. But outside of this Third Act we find but little vital characterization.

Naturally, as the play lacks a marked plot and any notable char-

acter drawing, it must seek some other kind of interest. I doubt if we can find anywhere in late years a drama, intended to be taken seriously, that depends for its effects so much upon the allied arts. I, for one, would welcome the play if for nothing else than the four beautiful songs it contains, especially the exquisite "Oh, set the sails, for Troy, for Troy is fallen." Dancing is twice introduced; and on occasion all the arts of stage-dom are mustered into service. Witness such directions as the following from the First Act:

"The shore of Ogygia with the sea cave of Calypso. A vine full of fruit trails over one side of the cave, and round about it grows whispering poplars and alders, from under which rillets of water run to the sea. Beyond, a verdant shore, with thickets of oleander, etc., and the ship of Ulysses lying beached. Within a cave a fire burning gives out a smell of sawn cedar and sandal wood. The sun behind is sinking and the water is golden, while over all broods a magic light. A chorus of Ocean-Nymphs is discovered dancing and singing on the sands."

These directions are certainly beautiful; but they are poetic rather than dramatic. Perhaps one other illustration will enforce sufficiently the stern task laid on the manager of the staging: "The descent into Hades. As the stage is darkened wailing is heard and a sound of moaning wind is heard which ceases as Scene II discloses a world of darkness with all things impalpable, save for a precipitous descent dimly seen, and at its foot a livid river flowing, a black barge floating on it. There is a continual movement as of wings and flying things."

We are helped in understanding Mr. Phillips' next play, "The Sin of David," by knowing that as originally planned the drama represented the Biblical story of the incident in the life of the Hebrew king; but that the play was subsequently changed to the portrayal of the same sin by a Puritan general in the time of the Protectorate. This commander, Sir Herbert Lisle, appears on the scene just in time to cast the deciding vote for the death of a young lieutenant who had seduced a woman. But even before the sentence can be promptly executed, he himself has fallen in love with Miriam, the young wife of his old host, Colonel Mardyke. Soon after he sends Mardyke to certain death in battle

and later marries Miriam. The third and last Act presents a scene five years later — the death of their child, Sir Herbert's confession to his wife, and their final reconciliation.

Personally I should not rank "The Sin of David" so high as "Herod" as a stage drama, nor so beautiful poetically as "Paolo and Francesca;" though I do not mean to imply that "The Sin of David" is lacking either in strong dramatic situations or in exquisite idyllic passages. Perhaps the whole story, as Mr. Phillips has treated it, is not fit material for a great drama. The retribution of the Third Act seems inadequate for the crime committed. From the standpoint of dramatic workmanship the play is interesting. The exposition marches along well; there is the firmness about it of a man who has practised his hand. The dialogue is better proportioned and more direct; it seems specially forceful in the use of alternate speeches of a single line of blank verse. Scattered through the drama are numerous key sentences and summarizing phrases. For example, "Shall one mad moment all these hours outweigh?" and "You must endure."

Many of the peculiarities of the earlier work now force themselves upon us as established mannerisms. We find the same single thread of story running through the play. The Puritan age was chosen, in part at least, because of all modern times it has been an age of fatalism; the atmosphere of predestination pervades the entire drama. Here comes a notable weakness in this particular drama. If in "Paolo and Francesca" we regret the death of the two lovers, we realize that their destruction was inevitable and thoroughly in keeping with the march of fate through the drama. Such, I feel, is not the case with the averted fate of Sir Herbert Lisle. "Inadequate," is likely to be the playgoer's comment on the last Act. This feeling that the characters are sent on the stage — each with a little predestined, inevitable part — makes it harder for us to sympathize with them. In this play the author has repeated with some variations the circumstances of Paolo and Francesca: a young and attractive wife married to an old and unsympathetic husband, and a lover bound in honor and struggling before he yields. Very largely from the nature of the story, the characters are more

attractive as delineated in the First and Second Acts than in the Third.

Perhaps the most notable feature of the play is the attention Mr. Phillips pays to scenery and tableaux. Darkness and dawn play an even more important part than in the preceding dramas. "The moon is clouded, and a light rain begins to fall; a single sigh of wind is heard." Parts of scenes are given to tableau representation with a freedom unequalled even in "Ulysses." We need only cite the death of the child Hubert, which for pantomimic representation goes far beyond anything else in serious contemporary drama. The background is called into service, in the use of the soldiers approaching, their Puritan hymn of victory, and their silence at their leader's gesture. It seems that, like Wagner, Mr. Phillips has felt the inadequacy of his medium and has struck off independently, enlarging the province of a certain class of the drama.

The appearance of Mr. Phillips' latest play, "Nero," was eagerly watched for by those who had hoped for something really great from him. "Nero" is an historical spectacle, showing the efforts of Agrippina to crown her son, his dependence upon her and his love changing to unwillingness to grant her a place in the government and even to a consent to her death through the wiles of his mistress, Poppæa, and his ministers. In the last Act is represented the burning of Rome, which Nero ascribes to the nemesis of his mother's spirit. A prophecy uttered before Nero's coronation serves as a keynote and is repeatedly introduced: "Nero shall reign, but he shall kill his mother." Throughout are emphasized the luxury of the times and Nero's ambition to be considered a poet. This drama is about a third longer than any of the preceding. Some of the four Acts are divided nominally into Scenes; but with one exception, no change of setting is made throughout the Act.

Most of the characteristics emphasized in the preceding dramas reappear. We note the single thread to the story and the characteristic fatalism, illustrated in the prophecy just quoted. Frequently the story is carried ahead through the messenger, sometimes in passages that grow a little tiresome. The directions given for the banquet scene are typical:

"Servants enter with various dishes and arrange tables and couches for the guests, and supper begins. They all recline amid a low hum of conversation. Dreamy music is heard, which might be a continuation of the music played before. Nero reclines at the head of the central table between Agrippina and Octavia. Poppæa is a prominent figure. Britannicus, with other youths, lies at a side table. Seneca, Burrus, and Tigellinus are present with other members of the court. At a sign from Nero dancing girls enter and perform a strange, wild measure, after which the hum of conversation is resumed. Again, at a sign from Nero, odors are spurted over the guests amid cries of delight. At a sign from Nero flowers descend from the ceiling. At first lilies, then of deeper and deeper color. At last a tempest of roses which gradually slackens."

The play shows the usual dependence upon background for its effects. Two good illustrations are offered in the scenes where Nero listens at the edge of the bay for the report of his mother's death, and at the close of the drama, where from a turret he watches the flames flaring up from burning Rome. Darkness and dawn are once more employed. Now it is "a glittering starlight," and later "the dawn comes up greyly."

"Nero" does not mark any advance, it seems to me, either in the directness or the beauty of the verse. Nearly all the drama is written in a blank verse lacking the power that holds us in "Paolo and Francesca." Frequently the verse impresses us as rhetorical and strained when such effects were far from the author's intentions. These qualities are illustrated in such lines as,

To clasp about her throat  
A civilization in sapphire.

Again, in the management of dialogue, of speeches of a single line, a form which Mr. Phillips affects, he is less happy than in some of his preceding work.

At least half a dozen passages remind us of lines in "Paolo and Francesca." Francesca says,

Nothing hath grieved me yet but ancient woe,  
I have wept but on the pages of a book.

Nero,

For legendary sorrows I can weep;  
With those of old times I have suffered much,  
And I, for dreams, am capable of tears.

Nero's trance when he believes that he has killed his mother recalls Herod's at the side of Mariamne. The courtier who dares censure Nero's verse as unequal to his previous efforts is an old acquaintance we have met in "Quo Vadis."

In character drawing the play is far from successful. Agrippina, with her frank acknowledgement of her guilt, seems most nearly tinged with life and challenges our admiration if not our respect. There is nothing distinctly Roman about the characters, nor do they hold us through the power of a sympathetic insight as did many passages in "Paolo and Francesca." We may seriously question the probability of Mr. Phillips' ever giving us flesh and blood people.

In one of his speeches Nero says,

But we shall minister to the eye and ear  
With color and with music;

and these lines might almost be taken as an epitome of the value of the play. If, as has been said, "Nero" has been successful on the stage, the reason is not far to seek. The play is thoroughly spectacular. Time after time the directions emphasize the gorgeous costumes of nearly all the principal characters. Odors are wafted across the stage; and all kinds of music, from the dreamy and voluptuous to the "burst of military strains," are introduced. "Nero" affords a chance for magnificent display with its splendid banquet scene, the luxurious apartments of the royal palace, and the final destruction of Rome. But when we have said this, we have given the play its highest praise; for we miss the beautiful poetry of the earlier verse, and we look in vain for any satisfactory character portrayal.

In summary, I think that we may say that Mr. Phillips is a better poet than dramatist, but that his work has shown a decided improvement in his management of stage technique and of dialogue. Certain qualities are common to all of his dramas: a single story; a sombre tone; an absence of humor; a skillful use of contrast and of dramatic shading; a modulation of the dia-



logue to help the actors; no great strength of characterization; a dependence upon other arts for his effects, seen in his insertion of songs into each play and in his use of stage lights, tableaux, and pantomime. I have not discovered any notable increase in what we might call dramatic richness. That Mr. Phillips' work will survive, I thoroughly believe; but rather as beautiful poems in dramatic form than as great acting plays.

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## II.—MR. AUGUSTUS THOMAS AND SOME OF HIS WORKS

While criticism is appreciation in the sense of estimating a work at its highest value, it has also in its province the less pleasant task of legitimate fault-finding. It is in both of these spirits that one must talk about Mr. Augustus Thomas and some of his plays. If fault-finding seems to occupy the larger space, it is not because the faults of Mr. Thomas as a playwright so far outweigh his virtues, but because, having so many virtues, he uses them to so small purpose; because, having apparently all the qualities for making really memorable plays, he seems persistently to refuse to make them.

One need make no excuse for considering his work, for when one speaks of the chief dramatists of America, Mr. Thomas is one of those who are numbered upon the fingers of the first hand. He is in the public eye; he is a man to be reckoned with. He is far more important to Americans than Mr. Bernard Shaw, because he himself is a good American.

From "Alabama" and "Arizona" he has moved up (or down) a ladder, the principal rungs of which are called "The Earl of Pawtucket," "The Other Girl," "Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots," "The Education of Mr. Pipp," "Delancy," and "The Embassy Ball." And we are still saying in that phrase so damning and so objectionable to a writer, that "he has promise."

I will withdraw the parenthesis of the preceding paragraph. Mr. Thomas has not gone down the ladder; he has decidedly gone up. To begin with, he has advanced materially in the technique of construction since the days of the first two plays mentioned,

which, though they were by no means void, were distressingly without form. Nowadays we can at least be sure of a careful piece of construction. We do not have a mere series of situations, but an articulated whole. Entrances and happenings are motivized. Everything counts in the structure he is building; the joints are carefully mortised; the rivets are in their proper holes, though they sometimes go in with a squeak. Indeed, this is the objection to his construction; it is that of the joiner, of the builder. In theatrical matters it is the counterpart of the modern steel-frame building. The gaunt skeleton rises surely and truly; but, even after Mr. Thomas puts on the stone veneer, the ribs sometimes show.

This sort of thing, we say, is an advance; it is better than the Irish stew formlessness of the drama of the seventies and eighties; and it is an advance which not only Mr. Thomas but most other American playwrights have made. But if it is good it is only a move in the right direction; we want our writer to take the further step of making his plays like living organisms, structures where the plot and situations unfold with the naturalness of life, where there is nothing forced or dragged in, where the necessities of character lend themselves naturally to the requirements of the stage.

Mr. Thomas' construction is, in short, too labored. He lays his foundations too obtrusively in his first Acts. Hence, to take notable examples, the opening Acts of "The Other Girl," and "Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots," filled as they are with palpable preparation, drag unconscionably; and the first night audiences shook their heads dubiously at the end of those opening Acts, and said, "Can this be the brilliant, the skillful, the amusing Augustus Thomas?"

None the less it was the brilliant, amusing and skillful Mr. Thomas, who, when he began to put on the trimmings, got his effects and his applause. For, as we have said, he has virtues in plenty. None knows better than he how to use theatrical material, how to make the most of minor stage-business in order to hold and entertain his audience—a bug in a water-pipe, a little red note-book, an artist's dummy, a telegram, a bunch of violets. These are made to serve and serve well as far as they

go. And in the handling of bigger situations, in getting climaxes, he is not less skillful from the stage point of view.

But his brilliance and skill are shown in a better way than by his appreciation of theatrical devices. As a careful and shrewd observer of men and manners he has given the stage more than one strong character, he has drawn more than one striking and sympathetic portrait, he has painted many true little pictures of real life. The old ranchman in "Arizona," Kid Garvey, the pugilist, the jealous Leffingwell, Mr. Pipp, Senator Bender, are all vital. Even the Earl of Pawtucket, although cut to order, is nevertheless cut admirably, and with a fine eye to the man it was to fit. It is to be noted that all of the characters which one remembers are men: but then Mr. Thomas is a very manly man; he is virile, he is robust, and (a great thing) he is not afraid to speak out. There are little scenes in all of his plays which show this clearness of observation, this frankness and sincerity in portrayal. The passage between the lovers in the First Act of "Arizona," the dialogue in "Delancy," where Margaret Dale (I have forgotten the name Mr. Thomas gives the character) tells Delancy that she loves him, seem to me very truly observed sections of life. Or, to mention only one other instance, Leffingwell's attitude toward his wife when he arrives in search of her at the country-house, strikes one forcibly by its unadorned truth.

A third virtue is that Mr. Thomas writes trenchant and natural dialogue. He uses always a man's pen. Sentences full of wit, humor and a sane outlook on life, make one sit up frequently.

These are the counts we find to his credit. We quarrel with him because, knowing how to do so many things so well, he so continually overdoes them. His robustuous sense of humor, his leaning toward the theatric, lead him unconsciously or deliberately to sacrifice truth of characterization, dramatic integrity, often good taste, to gain a laugh, make a situation or complicate a plot.

Let us touch for a moment on his humor. More than any modern playwright that we know of he is alive to the value of the stage "damn." In this he but shows his Americanism and his

masculinity. This is one of the proofs of his realness. Another less excusable trick is to poke fun, not at foibles, but at places. Thus, in "Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots," he gets five minutes of laughter by silly talk about the West: "Nobody ever stayed in Louisville who could get away," and a great deal more in that vein. Amusing enough to New Yorkers of the sort who come from places like Louisville, and who like to pretend that they didn't — amusing, but at best cheap, and not worth the time it takes to talk it — yet thoroughly typical of one of our author's devices for catching his audience.

Another mirth-provoking trick, and one which smells of France rather than America, is his introduction of dialogue which skirts the edge of the risqué. Mr. Corbin has said that the bounds of the Tenderloin and Fifth Avenue are divided by thin partitions. Mr. Thomas is often too conscious of this. In "Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots," the old doctor on being forced into bed with a dummy female (a situation certainly French in its suggestion) remarks, "This looks damned suspicious." And in the same play a girl, jealous because her lover has been found with an old flame, says, "And you found them sitting up together?"

"No, no," defends an older woman, anxious not to exaggerate what is a perfectly innocent situation.

"Don't tell me they were not sitting up," cuts in the suspicious woman. And the playwright gets his laugh.

Is it priggish to object to this sort of thing? Undoubtedly both the Tenderloin and Fifth Avenue like it; but at the place where the partition is the thinnest, I doubt whether they are safe guides in a matter of taste.

The critic certainly has a right to consider questions of taste or morals in their relation to the work of a dramatist. But, putting this aside, and viewing the matter purely from the standpoint of the artist, Mr. Thomas cannot find the excuse for his divagations that might be urged in the case of some of his contemporaries. Compare him with Mr. Shaw. His plain speaking, his allusions, are milk and water by the side of the gorgeous impudence of the Irishman in "Man and Superman." But these supposedly tabooed subjects are part of the latter's

dramatic theme; having taken such for the subject of his drama, artistically, he is privileged to speak his mind. Not so Mr. Thomas; his innuendoes strike one as gratuitous; they have nothing to do with the real theme of his play; they are drops of tabasco dashed into a very excellent soup, and boldly intended to fire the palate of the blasé diner-out.

This brings us to the main question of the drama under which, in a way, Mr. Thomas' delinquencies may be grouped. What do his plays deal with? To write great drama is not merely to put carefully observed bits of life upon the stage, else Mr. Ade would be the great American dramatist and Mr. Fitch a close second. Nor does it mean to paint truthfully one, or two, or a dozen characters. Drama, like poetry, must in some sort be a criticism of life. We want to know what our dramatists think about something—about the evils of gossip, about international marriages, about avarice, about graft in public life, about hypocrisy, about the seventh commandment, or the sixth—there are a million questions in this lively and changing old world which may properly concern the man who writes plays. This does not mean that he shall write with a moral purpose, that he shall be dull. It means that he shall handle dramatically some vital question so that his public may see it as he sees it. It is incumbent on him to divest his subject of all things not essential to its progression; he is to act, as it were, as a lens, selecting various rays of light and focusing them for his two-hour traffic. In fine he must have something to say. It is not at all essential that we agree with him. It is his sincerity toward his subject that counts.

That is why we are complaining when he refuses to make us feel that he is in earnest. Mr. Thomas thinks things—that anybody can see; and sporadically he says things; but he does not say them connectedly and as part of some definite dramatic theme. In "Mrs. Leffingwell's Boots," for instance, he has two propositions:—the evils of depending on circumstantial evidence, as a pair of boots on a fire-escape; and second, that a mental disability may be the result of some disarrangement to the backbone, and that this disability may be cured by an osteopath. The first is a vital matter appealing to everybody,

and what can be done with it has been ably shown by Mr. Henry Arthur Jones in "Joseph Entangled" and "Whitewashing Julia." But Mr. Thomas after broaching it, forgets it entirely and the lady's boots are left to rot on the fire-escape or scorch by the fire. The osteopathic thesis is scarcely inspiring as dramatic material, and the author does not make one feel that he has any feelings on the subject other than providing himself with a plot.

In "The Other Girl," he starts to contrast the very modern idea of Christian manhood with the ideals of the very materially minded sporting gentleman who tries to be simply "on the square." But he passes this up for what will give more obviously effective stage situations, the shielding of a guilty woman by an innocent. It is the same theme which he had used in "Arizona," with the sexes reversed; but it is one which is always sure of providing popular breathlessness.

"Delancy" began sincerely with a First Act which showed a young woman in love with a man and not afraid to tell him so, a question certainly fertile as a subject for drama; but the play speedily degenerated into conventional love business in a green house in which nobody did anything natural.

In both "The Earl of Pawtucket" and "The Embassy Ball" our author contents himself with constructing a plot which will give him situations in which his hero, Mr. D'Orsay may shine in his own particular British way. This is perfectly excusable, and the results are supremely funny; but eliminate the inimitable Lawrence and what have you left? Nothing that anybody would care a fig for. This is not the way in which real drama is made.

It is not unfair to say, then, that in none of his later plays has Mr. Thomas shown the least desire to say anything. The big problems, the absorbing questions of American life are open to him. Raised in the West, he knows the West — its ideals and possibilities, its struggles and its successes. He is familiar with politics and with business; he knows the newspapers at first hand. He has sat down with the frequenters of the Rialto, and gone to and fro with the commuters of New Rochelle. Does he hold in any way the mirror up to any of these phases

of our life? In flashes, yes. Bits of genre, true and vital characters, he has given us; but no single-minded dramatic treatment of any one theme. His chief desire is to make a play that will "go." His sense of the theatric value of small things is so great that it interferes with his sticking to one big thing. He prepares as laboriously for his minor effects as for his big situations, and the amount of labor expended in getting ready to do something that isn't really worth doing, makes his plays seem all bones and little flesh.

With so many things in his favor; with a mind keenly appreciative of the weak points in society's armor, with an eye for the eccentricities of individuals, with the ability to make sympathetic pictures of strong men, with a thorough mastery of the technique of the theatre, why does he not go a step further? These ought ye to have done and not to have left the other undone. It is not as if we were scolding at a man who can't. One feels always, after seeing one of Mr. Thomas' performances, that he is a man who won't.

"Well," says Mr. Thomas, in the slang of the street, "what's the answer? If I want to write plays of this sort, haven't I a right to?"

Looked at from one point of view he decidedly has a right to do as he jolly well pleases. But on another hand, one wonders if he has that privilege. Isn't the artist always bound to do the best that is in him, without an eye so continually on Broadway, or what he supposes are its desires? At any rate, one can understand the attitude of lovers of good drama who ask leave to lament that where there is so much promise there is not more of what they regard as fulfilment.

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### III.—TWENTIETH CENTURY DRAMA

"This done T. Killigrew and I to talk," writes that indefatigable theatre-goer, Samuel Pepys, in his diary, 12 February, 1666-67, "and he tells me that the stage is now by his pains a

thousand times better and more glorious than ever heretofore. Now wax candles and many of them; then, not above 3 lbs of tallow: now, all things civil, no rudeness anywhere; then as in a bear garden: then two or three fiddlers; now, nine or ten of the best: then nothing but rushes upon the ground, and everything else mean; and now all otherwise."

Apart from speculating on a hidden future there is no occupation so pleasant as comparing our own enlightened times with the benighted days past. To the versatile manager, Thomas Killigrew, the use of wax candles instead of three pounds of tallow indicated a substantial advance in the drama.

Our own day has seen many improvements in the mechanical setting of plays and in conveniences of the audience chamber, and they are not few who would not see in these signs of our dramatic preëminence. But one must go behind accessories to find the dramatic significance of an age. Again, we need to remember that change does not necessarily mean improvement. This thing our age seems prone to forget, flattering itself that every innovation is a step toward perfection. Whether credit for the passing of the lachrymose drama of the seventies should be given to our artistic perceptions or to the fickleness of public interest, it is unnecessary to decide. Sometimes change involves improvement. But it should be remembered that, as change depends largely on public interest, it is often as fickle and unreasoned as its source.

In assuming the rôle of the prophet on the drama of the future, three forces upon which that drama must depend present themselves. These are the audience, the playwrights, and the producers of plays. In two of these, the playwrights and producers, there seems to lie cause for positive optimism. The most hopeful feature of the audience lies in the rather negative merit that they will eventually take and approve what is persistently brought to their attention. But such acceptance is seldom prompt and fearless. That distrust of the novel and the experimental, that suspicion of one's individual judgment until it has received the concurrence of the mass, often operates to handicap innovations on the stage. Most modern movements in the drama, even those that show unmistakable signs of advance,



have been compelled to struggle against the positive opposition of the apostles of the old order and the timid indifference of the crowd.

Another influence that the audience wields in the drama, often to its detriment, arises from the audience's sense of irresponsibility for its own artistic tastes. The audience looks upon the drama as a thing imposed upon it. It must be amused; therefore it will tolerate what is given. "A poor thing, but mine own," we say of our wife, our poem, our dog — with false and shameful modesty admitting the allegation and daring the consequences. But when it comes to the play, to poetry, or to art: "A poor thing," we mutter, "a poor thing, but — the other man's, the manager's, the publisher's or the artist's." And that evening we go to the theatre and split our sides in appreciation of a tin woodman's effort to hold the mirror up to nature, and applaud loudly the attempt of a sextette of young women to act and sing as well as they look.

There is no need for pessimism. No art can be regenerated from without, and as long as our dramatists and managers are alert for something new, and are keen to express an old truth in a form for a new time, we may be sure they will find something better. How many great dramatists have been innovators! Diderot, in addition to doing everything else under the sun, was the inventor of modern drama. Hugo, in 1830, startled France with a daring romantic innovation in "Hernani," and that year marks the beginning of an epoch in modern drama. And who can say that it is not quite as much the novelty of Ibsen's dramatic appeal as his offensive realism that makes him still caviare to the general? In Germany they still point to 1889, the year of the production of Hauptmann's "Vor Sonnenaufgang," as a year of epochal import perhaps not less significant in the history of the drama than 1830. George Bernard Shaw, in spite of a treacherous habit of playing with his audience and execrable technique, is still by force of his daring innovations a portentous dramatic figure.

That advance is the only certain process in the drama Pinero bears witness when he says in a late magazine article: "We shall find, I think, . . . that the art of drama is not stationary but

progressive. By this I do not mean that it is always improving; what I do mean is that its conditions are always changing, and that every dramatist whose ambition it is to produce live plays is absolutely bound to study carefully . . . the conditions that hold good for his own day and generation."

In searching the future for the forms of art that will displace those of the present we need look for no new truths. "In art and poetry," says Weiss, "as in politics and philosophy there are but a very few truths. . . . True invention and wholesome originality do not consist in adding to them, but in modernizing their explanation and their practise." Nothing ages so soon and so pathetically as a convention of dramatic art. These few primary truths of which Weiss speaks are dressed up generation after generation in new garments. Romanticism follows classicism and is followed in turn by realism. As we pick up a specimen of the old romance it looks as strange and homely as an old daguerreotype. "We must not be greatly astonished," says About, "if, after thirty or forty years, plays, like women, begin to age. We may say of a drama, what the Spaniards say of a soldier: 'He was brave such-and-such a day.'"

Out of the shifting complex conditions of our time we must select those movements that seem to shape themselves to a tendency. From the mass of experiments in all kinds of writing, Sutro and Fitch with the comedy of manners, Phillips with poetic drama, Shaw with jointless but spiny satire, Barrie with dreams, Gorky with nightmares, Pinero engraving plays on copper with a stylus, Jones fashioning masterpieces with an axe, the Germans contending among themselves — Hauptmann even with himself — on the comparative merits of Märchendrama and realism, France trying to be clean, but like Lady Macbeth, unable to wash her hands, America following blindly and blithely the managers' specially conducted tour from slang to sentiment, from performing monkeys to Bernhardt, from the adoration before the ballet to an all-star cast production of Shakespeare, what shall we select as representative of our time? What are the forms that are prophetic of the future?

There is a certain manner in which the alert, wide-awake and sophisticated audience of the present is exerting a highly bene-

ficial influence in the drama. Our people have a great horror of being deceived with their eyes shut. If you can blind them by dazzling their wide open eyes you are hailed as a wizard. But, above all, people to-day object to any effort to dominate mind with feeling. They have an instinctive repugnance and fear for such an appeal. They demand of everything that arouses emotion that it be genuine and true, and that the intellect give warrant for what the emotions expend.

Now the drama lives on its emotional appeal. The past generation has been noteworthy in its trimming of the excesses of sentiment from its dramas. The false emotional excitement that furnished the basis of many of our plays a generation ago has been almost entirely banished from the stage. It seems not at all improbable that the present vogue of realism, pictorial comedy and farce comedy, is to be ascribed to the current distrust of an emotional appeal that achieves its power through technical means rather than through the story itself.

Realism with all its over-emphasis of *fact* at the expense of truth is *par excellence* a revolt against sentimentality and theatric clap-trap. It is based upon the belief that real life has its dramas no less moving than the stage. At best it indicates a return on the part of the dramatist to human nature as inspiration and a discarding of the uninspired and essentially false emotional carpentry of the theatre. Whatever hearing dramatic realism has achieved comes more from a recognition of the truthful aims of its authors than from any affection for the matter or admiration for the peculiar manner of the realists.

Anomalous as it may seem, those forms of drama which are ordinarily held to be artistically the lowest — farce comedy and pictorial or musical comedy — are, next to realism, the most sincere forms in the drama to-day. There is no questioning their popularity, a popularity that is undoubtedly connected with their simplicity and transparency of appeal. Pictorial comedy depends almost entirely for its appeal on beautiful scenery, pretty faces, graceful figures in the ballet, and tunes that are whistleable. The interest in it is frankly superficial. No one pretends that he goes to such a production for mental improvement. No one feels that he is being misled by something meretricious. The

auditor knows that what he hears cannot be weighed for its truth, but he finds sufficient justification for its existence apart from its truth.

Farce comedy appeals to the emotions no doubt — deludes them shamefully many a time — but who presumes to question the sources of his laughter? Laughter is its own excuse. We may leave the theatre after a farce feeling that we have made fools of ourselves, but we are not sorry we have done so. Our faces with the little wrinkles of mirth still hovering under the eyes carry nothing of that shame and disgust that follow an emotional orgy at “East Lynne” or “Camille.”

This habit of scrutiny, this attitude of scepticism that the people take on all matters to-day, especially those that relate with spiritual and emotional problems, should keep the stage true to its ideals whether those ideals be low or high. That this attitude of irreverence for spiritual things, of almost sacrilegious inquisitiveness into the springs of all feeling, is to-day keeping from the stage much of the sweetness of old romance and the healthy power of the drama of heroism, there is no doubt. But that it forever precludes the dramatization of the things of spirit is unthinkable. Our people do not close their hearts even to the transcendental, if it is the true transcendental. On the other hand, they do not now accept out of hand the made-to-order snow-storm and door-step sorrows of “The Two Orphans.” They know too well that the author and the actor are playing with them.

Not only in the plays themselves has there come an increased demand for sincerity. This demand has shown itself in the naturalism of production that has in the last twenty years displaced the old systems. And here there are two sides to the problem, for the question is a serious one whether the stage has not lost as much through naturalism as it has gained. Not so very long ago a room was represented merely by a back drop and wings at the side. Often there were no doors at all; simply a curtain was hung over an opening in the drop. At the sides the actor entered between any two of the wings and these were known as first, second and third entrances. When finally the room was enclosed on three sides and a ceiling was let down

to complete the illusion, naturalism had made a great step. Now the actors entered through doors just as in a house. With the change of scenery had come a change in the reading of the actor's lines. The mid-years of the nineteenth century were the modern heyday of Shakespearian production. Macready and Phelps and Booth had no successors as players of Shakespeare. And compared with modern standards these men were notoriously careless of their stage setting. With them the declamation was the real thing, and scenery and properties were but accessories. Declamation is a word we cannot apply to English acting, now Irving is dead. To-day our actors just talk, and though the dialogue of real life is important in the drama much was lost when the old school of actors died out. When naturalism in action became the scheme the actor lost his tremendous predominance in the production. Before he had carried the story alone. Now he shares his task with the scenery and costumes. Scenery became more and more elaborate, and as it did so the actor was more and more subdued into his surroundings.

Tom Wrench, the young dramatist in Pinero's "Trelawney of the Wells," expresses the ideal of the naturalistic stage-manager thus: "This is the kind of chamber I want for the First Act of my comedy. . . . I tell you I won't have doors stuck here, there and everywhere; no, nor windows in all sorts of impossible places. . . . Windows on one side, doors on the other — just where they should be architecturally. And locks on the doors, real locks — to work; and handles — to turn!" These vaporings of Tom Wrench were realized. For years the best productions carried sets, "the doors of which would slam with a loud sound," as was proudly announced by a press agent.

But revolt is still the rule, and mutterings against a strict naturalism in stage setting are beginning to arise. At the best the stage never does look like the real world, and the more careful the imitation is the more pathetic does its unreality become. And then, do we wish the stage to look like the real world? Is it not in its extra-worldliness that the stage finds its great excuse for existence? "The best in this kind are but shadows, and the worst are no worse if imagination amend them,"

wrote Shakespeare. Here naturalism fails. The appeal of scenery must ideally be a symbolic appeal, arousing a picture but not presenting it, awakening imagination but not allaying it.

So in stage setting the next step will be one of symbolism. The academic studies in the plastic stage of Shakespeare, with the revivals of Ben Greet and the restoration of the Elizabethan stage at our universities, will do much to prepare the way for the new conception. The experiments of Yeats in the Irish National Theatre and of Gordon Craig, Ellen Terry's gifted son, will be of even more practical influence. With regard to the reading of lines it seems improbable that we shall have a return of the old school of Shakespeare declamation. It is no less certain, too, that until this return the long looked for renaissance of poetic drama will be postponed. Poetic drama cannot succeed until its presentation is harmonious with its conception.

In dramatic technique the most significant change in the drama of the immediate future will be in the conception of the time scheme of the play. The day of the mechanical unities is well nigh past. The unity of time is a factor of the formula of the "well made" play which will be forgotten with the dramas of Scribe. Again, as in all the highest of arts, imagination is to be commanded to amend the imperfections of the artist's medium. Pinero, in "Iris," separates two of his Acts into perfectly distinct time periods. The curtain merely falls and rises and in a moment the lapse of hours is represented. In Hauptmann's "Elga," scenes change as in a dream. Out of a flash of darkness the scenes grows upon the beholder as if in sleep. There is no apology for the unreality of change of scene. There is rather in Hauptmann's mind, as there was in Shakespeare's, the idea that the audience will follow a moving and veracious story whithersoever it may lead them. The great advantages of such a conception in the depiction of growing character and complex incident may readily be imagined.

The significant movements in the drama of the last few years have been all in the direction of simplification. It is for this purely technical reason, rather than for its scientific dogmatism, that realism is to be considered the representative dramatic type of the present. This movement of realism, that under different

guises and different names all our arts have experienced, is better in what it entails than in itself. Its best work has been to scourge hypocrisy, to prick the bubble of vanity, to dispel the stylish delusion, to nail the popular lie. But the methods of realism are not constructive. It has killed the old romantic verve of the drama. A glorified technique remains, stripped of excrescences and pretense, but it has no soul.

What shall be the soul of the new drama? It cannot be the old fashioned romance. Rostand, the *fin de siècle* romanticist, has become a verbalist, a virtuoso. He goes over and over again the chilling round of measuring feet in "Chanticleer." George Bernard Shaw has transplanted romance to topsyturvydom. How delightfully humorous it is to see the romantic hero careering over Europe in an automobile pursued by his fair one bent on matrimony. And Barrie has used quite as pointed a satire in "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire."

Through the literature of the early years of the twentieth century is sounding timorously the note of a new mysticism. It is the mysticism of an active world. Along with the demand for the sterling and the true there is coming the recognition that truth is deeper than sight and soul is truer than sense. It is in giving expression to this new spirituality that the drama of tomorrow will be better than the drama of to-day. Emerson preached transcendentalism years ago. But Maeterlinck is dramatizing it to-day.

This new mysticism is showing itself in countless ways in our literature. In nature studies, in studies into the lives of animals, in the popular stories of children, there is manifest an effort to get away from a sophisticated world framed in logic and reinforced by common sense. No one can claim that Kipling has not a true enough realization of the value of the *fact* in literature. Yet in "The Day's Work," "The Brushwood Boy," and "They," he has delved behind the fact to the elusive mystery that lies back of it.

The desire to dramatize the spiritual world that Kipling and so many others have explored, is showing itself in many of our greatest dramatists. An increasing naïveté of view is serving to change the atmosphere of many of our best plays from reality

to dream. "I take my subject in a dream," wrote the elder Dumas. "Maeterlinck," says Shuré, "is the dramatist of dreams." Yeats in "The Land of Heart's Desire," and Hauptmann in "Hannele's Ascension," and "Elga," have, each in his own way, presented a moving story as it might be seen through the eye of sleep.

This atmosphere of dreams gives a spiritual unity to a drama that cannot be gained by realism. And it is bringing us nearer to the old poetic conception of a play as it was held in the days of the giants.

Children are mystical little things. And one dramatist of the future in England is seeking out the poetry and tenderness in real life through the hearts of children. We can accept as characteristics of children a gentleness and simplicity that in the case of grown-ups would be unreal. And so Barrie, who knows well our materialism and scepticism, places children on the stage and bids us find ourselves in them. It is a pretty deception he plays on us when in "Peter Pan," the good fairy comes to take the Darling children to the Never-Never-Land. We follow their fortunes tenderly, never dreaming that Barrie himself is Peter Pan, and that for a breathless hour we are lost with him in the Never-Never-Land of soul.

Now the fairy play is not presented as the type of the coming drama. Barrie is an individual genius. But it does seem clear that his work integrates itself with the spiritual trend in art and literature. The dramatists of the Irish Literary Revival, the writers of German Märchendrama, the Belgian Emerson, Barrie, all help that trend back to the mysterious, the unexplainable, and the unfathomable. It is a movement toward beauty for its own sake. The new drama should be as simple and definite in its appeal as the old moralities.

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